



Topical steroid ointment application to gums using custom-made trays

What are the aims of this leaflet?

This leaflet aims to help you understand more about the use of a topical corticosteroid (steroid) ointment and how to apply it to the gums inside your mouth using custom-made trays.

What is a steroid ointment and why have I been prescribed it?

Topical steroid ointments are designed to treat skin conditions but can also be used in the mouth under specialist direction (i.e. used “off-label”). Steroid ointments are commonly prescribed in Oral Medicine and there is evidence to support their use in treating some conditions which affect the mouth.

Topical steroid ointments work by reducing inflammation and pain. They can promote healing in a number of oral conditions such as oral lichen planus and oral blistering conditions (including pemphigus vulgaris and mucous membrane pemphigoid). Topical steroid ointments are available in different strengths which are referred to as potencies: mildly potent, moderately potent, potent and very potent. The Oral Medicine clinician looking after you will decide on the appropriate potency based on the nature and severity of your oral condition.

In general, we use higher potency for severe flare ups and a lower potency for milder symptoms. The lowest potency that controls your symptoms should be used. However, everyone’s response to treatment is different so your treatment regimen may vary. If this is the case, it will be clearly explained to you.

What is a custom-made tray?



A custom-made tray is a plastic covering, made specifically to fit your mouth, which sits over your teeth and gums (similar to a gum shield). You will need to have an impression taken of your teeth and gums for the tray to be made. A custom-made tray is being used because your oral condition affects the gums around your teeth. The tray allows the steroid ointment to be held in contact with the gums so it can have a direct affect. Your clinician will show you how to insert and remove the tray(s). The tray should fit securely over your teeth and gums, but please get in touch if you think it doesn't fit properly.

How do I use the steroid ointment in the custom-made trays?

1. Identify the sore area of gum(s) in your mouth and the corresponding area(s) on the tray.
2. Apply a pea-sized amount of the steroid ointment into the tray and use a clean finger to spread it over the tray surface corresponding to the area(s) of gum that are sore.
3. Insert the tray(s) over your teeth and gums.
4. Wipe away any excess ointment that spills over the edge of the tray(s) with a

piece of tissue and wash your hands thoroughly.

5. Leave the tray(s) in for 10 minutes once daily, or as directed by your clinician.
6. Take the tray(s) out of your mouth and without swallowing, vigorously rinse your mouth with water and then spit the water out.
7. Clean the tray(s) with cold water and liquid soap and then wash your hands thoroughly.
8. Do not eat, drink or brush your teeth for 30 minutes after the tray has been used.

How long should I use the steroid ointment in the custom-made trays for?

In general, a topical steroid ointment should only be used in short bursts to manage any flare up of your oral condition. Ideally, it should not be used daily over long periods of time (for example months or years), particularly if you are using a potent or very potent steroid. Your clinician will give you clear instructions on how often to use the steroid ointment.

What are the potential risks and side effects of using the steroid ointment in the mouth?

When used correctly, it is rare for steroid ointments applied onto the gums to cause side effects. Some people experience a burning sensation when they first start to use the ointment but this normally resolves after a few days. The risk of absorption of the topical steroid ointment into your body is low. However, if it is used for long periods, particularly a potent or very potent topical steroid, it could affect other parts of the body, such as lowering the levels of the hormone called cortisol. However, your clinician will be checking for any signs or symptoms of this during your treatment.

Oral thrush (fungal infection) can develop when using topical steroids. This is harmless, however, your mouth may feel more uncomfortable. A course of antifungal treatment will normally help manage this. If you feel oral thrush is persisting or the symptoms from your mouth are worsening, you should let your Oral Medicine clinician know.



Where can I find out more?

If you would like further information or have concerns, you can discuss this with your clinician who will be happy to help. Please also read the drug information leaflet that comes with the medicine.

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